

*The Case of the RICH YOUNG MAN in the Gospel endeavoured  
to be set in a clear Light;*

A N D

*The levelling Principle of selling All, and giving it to the Poor,  
as drawn from that Passage, and lately advanced and taught  
by SOME,---proved to be ill grounded.*

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# S E R M O N

Preached in the Parish-Church of

St. MARY LE BOW, LONDON,

O N

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16. 1739.

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
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Curate of *Nuthurst in Sussex*, and Author of the REMARKS  
on the Continuation of Mr. *Whitfield's* Journal, &c.

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L O N D O N: 

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THE GREAT BRITISH YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

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# SEBASTIAN

Presented to the London Society of Friends



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by John Brownworth, A.M.  
Clerk of the Society in 1825, and Author of the  
on the Constitution of the Society of Friends

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T H E

# P R E F A C E.

**W**HEN I first took this Subject into Consideration, it was with an Intent only to satisfy myself about a Point of so great Importance, and which had begun to make a great Noise, as seeming to get Ground, and to be attended with such Consequences as were rather to be pitied than commended; but when I found (as indeed in the general I was aware before, from its Inconsistency with so many other Passages in the New Testament) that it was a Doctrine without a Foundation, and that what I had put together of my Thoughts seemed to give some Satisfaction to my Auditors, I was induced, on their Request, to make it publick.---And if it should be asked (since I have taken something of a Method different from others) how I should come by these new Notions? I shall not say, in the Language of some, that I had them from Inspiration, but, as the Truth is, that they were the Result of my own Reasoning and Consideration, perhaps indeed not wholly unassisted by the Grace of God, which never fails to accompany, in some Measure, our sincere and humble Searches after Truth. But if it shall still be insisted on, that what I have here advanced comes short of the Point intended, and that (notwithstanding those Arguments I have produced to the contrary) it was a positive Command to this young rich Man to sell All, &c.---At the same Time, I insist upon it, (and hope it is here sufficiently proved) that it cannot be an absolute

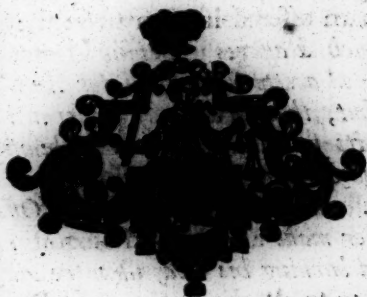
*positive and necessary Duty, binding upon all rich Men, in all Ages of the Christian Church, to whom no such Command was ever given either by our Lord or his Apostles.---What? A Command (supposing it be a such) given to a Jew, a Pharisee, one of that Set on whom our Lord pronounced Woes more than once, called them Hypocrites, and compared them to painted Sepulchres, fair to the sight, but full of Stench and Rotteness within; A Command depending on the particular Circumstances of the Case in Hand; and if not purely intended for the Man's Conviction (as I have argued) yet certainly to discover to the Disciples, and the Multitude then present, the Weakness and Imperfection of a Pharisaical Righteousness when put to the Test (as our Lord had before told his Disciples, Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of God.) Such a Command as this, I say, and so circumstantiated, to be supposed a general Command to Christians, without ever being repeated, but the very contrary frequently supposed! Monstrous Absurdity! Suppose an Enthusiast should take it into his Head to form an Argument thus, in order to prove that it is the Duty of every Christian Father to offer up to God his most dearly beloved Son for a Burnt-offering, because Abraham was commanded so to do,---would it not seem more forcible to urge that Abraham is expressly called the Father of the Faithful, and is highly commended for this heroic Act of Faith; therefore in course, all the Faithful in all Ages, who are the Children of faithful Abraham, must be virtually included in that Command. But I have done;---only give me Leave here, by the By, and as I have just mentioned that Case, to communicate an Observation, which, I frankly own, I had from another Hand, but which may possibly be of Service to some perplexed, or doubting Souls. What a Stir has been lately made, and what Controversies have arisen about the seeming Immorality of that Command to Abraham, as if it were unworthy of God, inconsistent with his infinite Holiness, and therefore of doubtful, or no Authority*



*thority at all, tho', at the same Time, so strongly confirmed in the New Testament; and all this built upon a Mistake, that God commanded Abraham to slay his Son? This, indeed, was Abraham's Mistake, and that which so highly enhanced his Faith; for he believed that God, who had made him such great Promises, to be fulfilled by, or through the Means of his Son Isaac, could, and would restore him to Life again, sooner than break his Promises.——But God had commanded no such Thing as the slaying of his Son, and forbade it by an Angel from Heaven, when about to be executed:——The Command was, that Abraham should offer up his Son Isaac, &c. which he might do, and actually did, without slaying him, as to the full Intent of God's Command. For this we have the Testimony of the holy Spirit of God himself, Heb. xi. 17, 18. By Faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the Promises, offered up his only begotten Son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy Seed be called. Here it is expressly said, and repeated, that Abraham offered up his Son. St. James repeats it too, and that more expressly, saying, that Abraham offered his Son upon the Altar, James ii. 21. From which Passages, I think it may be fairly concluded, (not that God accepted the Will for the Deed, as generally interpreted) but, that he actually performed every Title of God's Command in its full Intention, tho' he himself had thought that the slaying and burning of his Son to Ashes upon the Altar was included in it. But God did not say, "Offer up thy Son a Burnt-offering, or make a Burnt-offering of him, by taking away his Life, and burning his Body upon the Altar; but, Offer him up for, or to all the Intents and Purposes, Fruits and Benefits of an Offering, not Burnt-offering; εἰς δολοκάρπασιν, as the LXX render it, not δολοκάρπασιν, or δολοκάρπωμα; which last Word is generally, and I believe always used for Burnt-offering, both in the Old and New Testament. Besides, those that understand the Hebrew, may please to observe, that the Word, in the Original, which we translate for a Burnt-offering, signifies*

nifies only and properly, In Ascensionem, i. e. For an Offering that should ascend up to, or towards Heaven, so as to be accepted there; which Abraham conceived could be no other than a Burnt-offering ascending up in Flames. But his Offering which he had already made, without slaying his Son, &c. had ascended thither, and was accepted there, as is intimated in that the Angel is said to call to Abraham out of Heaven, &c. And in the Recital of this Act it is said,---I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord,---Because thou hast done this Thing; &c. Now, what could that be, but what God had commanded him? And again afterwards,---Because thou hast obeyed my Voice. So that certainly he had fulfilled all that God had commanded him; however, he understood the Terms of the Command.

Thus the Difficulty vanishes at once, the Infidel is silenced, and God is justified when he is judged.



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MATTH. XIX. 20, 21.

*The young Man saith unto him, All these Things have I kept from my Youth up: What lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven: and come and follow me.*

**I**T must be confessed, that we live in an Age wherein we need not much Quick-sightedness and Sagacity, to discern many Pillars supporting the Kingdom of Darknes: For 'tis a great Part of Mankind that we see debauched and corrupt in their Practice, having by a vicious and degenerate Life, brought themselves under the Power of evil Habits, and the Slavery of unreasonable, indulged Lusts. And as it is no easy Matter to persuade them to turn from their long-reigning Iniquities, and forsake their beloved Vices, 'tis certainly the Duty of all true Professors of Christianity to labour after a Reformation, by using their utmost Endeavours to stop the Growth of Sin and Iniquity. I say, 'tis the Duty of all true Professors of Christianity, tho' it be more particularly incumbent on the Ministers of Christ's Gospel, as the chief Supporters of his gracious Kingdom, to pull down the strong Holds of *Satan*, and to defeat his every undermining Project. But before we set upon this great Work of giving a Check to Sin, and propagating Holiness in this impious Generation, we ought to consider of the Means that are to be used in order to carry it on successfully.

fully. For 'tis a Truth too evident, that a good End may be pursued by wrong Means, and we may pretend to act for Christ, when we are really acting against the true Interest of his Kingdom. And therefore, if Men, in their Endeavours to reclaim the Wicked from their sinful Courses, act not with due Consideration, they may only strengthen the Powers of Darkness, and tie faster the Bands of Iniquity: Instead of displaying the Beauty of Christ's Church, they may extinguish her Glory; and instead of spreading her Fame, they may lay her Honour in the Dust, by bringing a Scandal upon her holy Profession. To consider well of the Means before we pursue the End, is no more than what is required of us by the Rules of Prudence, and certainly Prudence ought to be the chief Governess of all our Actions; for those that are performed without her Direction, want a main Circumstance to denominate them truly virtuous. A Man may mean well, and do some Things, which, considered in themselves, are highly commendable and Praiseworthy; but if such Actions be performed unreasonably, or after a rash and heady Manner, they may not only lose their own Virtue, but render the Performer highly culpable. So, with Regard to our Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Good of Men; tho' such Zeal be good in itself, yet, if once it be too strong for Reason, its pure Nature is intirely corrupted, 'tis no other than a blind Zeal, and such as the Apostle discovered in some of the Jewish Converts, *Not according to Knowledge*. As eagerly then as we are bent upon accomplishing that glorious Work, of bringing Men from the Slavery of the Devil into the perfect free Service of God, we should take Care not to make more Haste than good Speed. Perhaps Religion is lukewarm in the Breasts of the Generality of Men, and they are righteous over-little; but shall we, in order to discover to such Men the Error of their Ways, teach them to run into Superstition, and be righteous over-much?

Perhaps

Perhaps Men are backward in the Performance of the Duties of the Gospel; but is the only Means of exciting them to a speedy Performance of them, first to represent Christianity as an unreasonable Service, and, with regard to the Generality of Men, an impracticable Institution, and then to question them how they shall escape if they neglect so great Salvation? Surely it would be a much greater Encouragement to the Prosecution of that End, to shew them, that notwithstanding they are absolutely required to work out their Salvation by running the Way of the Divine Commands, yet that such Commands *are not grievous*, but that Christ's Service is perfect Freedom, *his Yoke easy, and his Burthen light*. Perhaps Men are so remiss in attending the publick Worship in the holy Temple of the Lord, that we have great Reason to cry out with the Prophet,---\* *Is it Time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled Houses?* But is the only Means of convincing them of their Duty in frequenting the House of the Lord, to tell them, that *Truth is Truth, if they hear it in a Church or a Field, from a Stonewall or a Pulpit?* May it not as well be said, that Truth is Truth, let who will preach it? But if Men might act by this Rule, or rather thus without any Rule, every Illiterate, that has a Front of Assurance, might set up for a Teacher, and then every Fool would soon think himself too wise to be taught.

Surely, if we intended to incline Men to worship the LORD in the Beauty of Holiness, we should not endeavour to draw them where our own roving Fancies lead; but rather to convince them, that *particular Places* were always set apart for the Performance of Divine Service, even from the first Foundation of the Christian Church. There would, undoubtedly, be many better Christians in the World, if Men would but practise what they already know, especially by the Performance of the Duty of Prayer; but is

\* Haggai i. 4.



the only Means to incline them to such Practice, to allow them to neglect the Prayers of the Church, provided they attend on frequent Preachments? Indeed, without such expatiating Effusions, the Preacher might not give so great a Testimony of his Ability, nor have such fair Opportunities of shewing his Gifts. But surely the End of the Ministry is the Edification of the People, and not the Ostentation of any Man's particular Gift; and if so, certainly the People would be better edified by those Ministers, who content themselves with a faithful and judicious expounding of the Scriptures, than by those, who, with ranging, unconnected Discourses, fill the Ears of their Auditors with nothing but their own Conceits and Inventions.

Now, we are not ignorant that there are a Set of Men, who are distinguished by the Appellation of *Methodists*, by their having undertaken that great Work of reforming a wicked World, and pursued it by such *Methods* as these. But such Devices, howsoever right they may seem in their own Eyes, and the Eyes of those who are guided by Ignorance or Prejudice, will never be thought, by an impartial Understanding, ever to affect that End which is the Glory of God, and the Good of Men, the Purity of Religion, and the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness. But Time will not now permit me to discover to you all the *irrational Proceedings* of this Set of Men, nor yet all those *enormous Doctrines* which they have broached, and sent abroad into the World by virtue of such Proceeding. However, I beg Leave to point out one of those particular Doctrines which they have advanced, as I presume I can clearly demonstrate it to be Antiscriptural. The Doctrine is this, "That the Gospel of Jesus Christ absolutely requires all rich Men, in all Ages of the Church, to sell their Estates, and give them to the Poor, or otherwise they can never enter into the Kingdom of God." Which Doctrine, they tell us, (as it is evidently deducible from these Words of  
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my Text, and other Passages of Scripture of the like Nature, so) is by them founded thereupon. And indeed we find this levelling Principle advance by Mr. Law in his Treatise of *Christian Perfection*, (Page 90) where he introduces this Text, and thus comments upon it;---*One Thing thou lackest, go thy Way and sell, &c.* " This Remark, says he, " and that other following, where our Saviour says, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, undeniably shew us thus much, that what is here required of this young Man, is also required of all rich Men, in all Ages of the Church, in order to their being true Members of the Kingdom of God ; for if they may enjoy their Estates, and yet enter into the Kingdom of God, then the Difficulty is vanished, and they may enter with Ease." Here we see that this Author affirms, that the *actual Possession of worldly Riches is inconsistent with the State of Christianity*; I say, the *actual, or bare Possession*.---For tho' he seems to be aware of the absurd Consequences of this Assertion, and therefore puts the Word *Enjoyment*, and as a saving Clause, adds afterwards,---" That he sufficiently parts with all, who parts with the Self-enjoyment of it ; " yet this does not render his Assertion a Whit the less positive: For if it was an absolute Command to this rich young Man to sell what he had, &c. and such the Author takes it to be, by his saying, " That what is here required of the young Man, was certainly by Way of necessary Duty ; and also, " that the same is required of all rich Men, &c." then I assert, that such Command must indisputably regard the *actual Possession*. For in this Command of our Saviour, there is no Mention of Self-enjoyment, or pleasurable Enjoyment.---Besides, does not our Saviour add,---*And give it to the Poor*. Now, can a Man retain the actual Possession of all that he has, and, at the same Time, be said to give the Self-enjoyment, or pleasurable Enjoyment of it to the Poor?

More-

Moreover, seeing that when in common Discourse, we say such a one enjoyed an Estate by virtue of such a one's Death, or the like, we mean with regard to the *actual Possession*; so when this Author says, " If the Enjoyment of Riches had been a Thing that had suited with Christ's Religion, &c." and then puts the Word *Renunciation*, by Way of Antithesis to the Word *Enjoyment*, (as he really does) we may fairly conclude, that by parting with the *Enjoyment*, he must mean parting with the *actual Possession*. And indeed that he does mean as much, (notwithstanding he has thought proper to add, in some Places, to the Word *Enjoyment*, the Epithet of *Self*, or *Pleasurable*) I think is fully apparent from what follows,---" If, says he, the Enjoyment of Riches had been a Thing that had suited with Christ's Religion," then we may suppose, that the Renunciation, &c. would least of all have been imposed at a Time when there were so many *unavoidable Burthens* to be undergone. Now, here you see he makes this Renunciation a Burthen, and surely he could not esteem it as such, unless he meant it of the actual Possession. But 'tis no Wonder if this Author should assert here, that the Possession of worldly Riches is prohibited to Christians, since he had before expressly declared, (p. 71) that the Prosecution of worldly Business, the Means of acquiring such Riches, is likewise inconsistent with the State of Christianity. *Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my Disciple.*

" This Parable, says he, teaches us, that not only the Vices, the Wickedness, and Vanity of this World, but even its most lawful and allowed Concerns, render Men unable to enter, and unworthy to be received into the true State of Christianity: And therefore, he who is busied in an honest and lawful Calling, may, on that Account, be as well rejected by God, as he who is vainly employed in foolish and idle Pursuits." The Sense of which Interpretation of both Passages, seems to me to amount

to this,---that he who professes himself a Christian, must forthwith relinquish all worldly Possessions, and all worldly Employments. But to shew that this Doctrine is false, it might be sufficient to refer you to some few of those several Passages of holy Writ, which contain Rules and Directions for our Christian Carriage with regard to our temporal Affairs,---where the Rich are commanded to give \* *Of*, not *All* their *Abundance*, and to be † *Ready* to distribute, and *Willing* to communicate to the Necessities of others, without any Command for, or the least Supposition of parting with *All*.---And all Christians in general, to observe Justice and Honesty in all their Dealings; not ‡ *defrauding one another*, or *over-reaching* in Bargains, and the like.---But of this more by and by, and I chuse rather at present to go to the Fountain-head of All, in the Words of my Text,---*Go and sell that thou hast, &c.*

I must confess, that most Commentators have interpreted these Words as an absolute Command to the young Man, tho' peculiar to him alone. But as I have shewn you that Mr. *Law* has proceeded farther in regard to this Matter, and interpreted them as an absolute Command not only to the young Man, but also as an absolute Command extending to all rich Men, in all Ages of the Christian Church; so we find that the *Methodists* (as they are called) have publicly declared that they fall in with the same Notion. My Intent therefore is to strike at the very *Root* of this *Levelling Principle*, by shewing that these Words,---*Go and sell that thou hast, &c.* (which, by the Confession of these Levellers, is the main Foundation of such Principle) was no Command by Way of necessary Duty, even to the young Man himself, because not intended by our Saviour to be put in Execution even by him: Which Point, if it can be made out, must consequently prove it no Command extending to others. But in proving this to be no Command, I shall not confirm

\* 2 Cor. viii. 13. † 2 Tim. vi. 18. ‡ 1 Theff. iv. 6.

that Notion long since advanced by some *Romish* Commentators, namely, That these Words were spoken by our Saviour as *Consilium Perfectionis*; so as that if the young Man had actually sold his Possessions, &c. he would then consequently have been absolutely perfect, and entitled to a greater Degree of eternal Happiness; for this I condemn as equally erroneous. But my Design is to make it evidently appear,

*First*, That our Saviour intended these Words only as a Means or Method of Conviction; or as an Argument to convince the Man, that he was not so perfect as he thought himself to be.

*Secondly*, And that the young Man took our Saviour's Words as so intended.

*First* then, I shall endeavour to make it evidently appear, That our Saviour intended these Words only as a Means or Method of Conviction; or as an Argument to convince the Man, that he was not so perfect as he thought himself to be.

The only Reason why these Words have been generally looked upon as an absolute Command to this young Man, at least in the Way of necessary Duty, and in order to his becoming a Disciple of Christ, as they suppose, is only because these Words, *Go and sell, and come and follow*, run manifestly in a commanding Stile. To this I reply, --- That when the Woman taken in Adultery was brought to our Lord, (*John* viii. 3.) he said to her Accusers, (Verse 7.) *He that is without Sin amongst you, let him first cast a Stone at her*; --- which is in the Form of a Command equally with this of my Text, and yet like this too, not intended to be executed by those to whom such seeming Command was given. For our Lord, who is a *Searcher of the Heart*, and *knoweth what is in Man*, knew beforehand, that neither of these seeming Commands would be complied with, and therefore intended them only as a Means whereby they might



might stand convicted by their own Consciences, as it is expressed, Verse 9. of that Chapter. And, in the present Case, I see no Reason why our Lord should be supposed to enjoin what is here mentioned as a Duty, in order to this young *Pharisee's* embracing the Gospel; for it does not appear that he had any even the least Thought of commencing a Disciple of Christ, but only was desirous of asking him a curious Question, (as several others of the same Sect had done just before) and that founded on his supposed Perfection and Title to eternal Life; which doubtless he expected to have confirmed, and therefore was sorely grieved at the Disappointment, and went away like the others, (those Accusers of the Woman) convicted by his own Conscience. But supposing that our Lord was here pressing him of his own Accord to be his Disciple, which I see no Ground or Reason for, yet still there is no Reason to imagine that such a Command as this would have been given him as a necessary Means in order to his becoming a Disciple, because the same Scriptures assure us, that there *were*, and *might* be rich Men in the Christian Church. See 1 *Tim.* vi. 17. *James* i. 10. and ii. 2. The Apostle St. *John* had his own House, \* to which, after our Lord's Crucifixion, he took the Blessed Virgin Mother. St. *Barnabas* the Apostle had an Estate of his own, which he sold afterwards indeed towards the Support of the Christian Church in the Weakness of its Infancy; as you read also, † that many others did who had Possessions of Lands or Houses.--- But not from the Obligation of any Christian Precept, either of Christ or his Apostles, or as a standing Rule for Christians afterwards; for at that very Time, St. *Peter* permits the Christians to retain their own if they thought fit, saying, to *Ananias*, (in the next Chapter, Verse 4.) who had also sold a Possession,--- *Whilst it remained was it not thine own, and after it was sold, was it not in thy own Power*, i. e. to dispose of the Money as thou wouldst? There had not been the

\* John xix 27. † Acts iv. the latter End.

least Intimation that they *ought to sell* their Possessions; and this was now done on a particular Account, as I mentioned, and as Dr. *Whitby* well observes, " either by them who had " Lands in *Judea*, as *Barnabas* had his in *Cyprus*, and being " resolved not to return thither, but to cleave to the Apostles, " could make but little Benefit of them there; or else in *Ju-* " *dea*, and therefore, they knowing from our Saviour's Pro- " phesy of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and from his Ex- " hortation, that they were shortly to fly from, and quit " them to the Enemy, were willing to part with their " Estates for the Benefit of the Church, before they were " snatched from them by the Enemy." Christians indeed may, at any Time, part with their Estates, if they think fit, to pious and charitable Uses, and far be it from me to discourage any such heroic Acts of Goodness; ---but there is a wide Difference between such *voluntary Acts* and a *positive Obligation*. And if Riches fall into the Hands of one who knoweth how to use them to God's Glory, and the Relief of indigent Christians, as well as to the Supply of his own Needs, it seems a Contradiction to suppose that God doth require him to part with them, and thereby divest himself of any farther Opportunity of promoting his Glory, or doing good to his needy Members. But I proceed farther to prove, that these Words, *Go and sell, &c.* were, in all Probability, designed only as a convincing Argument, and not as a Command.

It will be somewhat to this Purpose to take notice, that this was no immediate Address, but a direct Answer to a Question proposed by a *Jew*, one of the stricter Sort, a *Pharisee*, (as I think he is universally allowed to be) and that with Regard to *Jewish Perfection*.

Now, this young *Pharisee* having, as he thought and declared, kept a constant Course in the Way of God's Commandments, began to swell with a Conceit of his good Estate towards God. He thought himself already on the Borders of Perfection;

Perfection, if not in the actual State thereof; and therefore, presuming he would be as much in our Saviour's Esteem as in his own, puts this Question to him,---*What lack I yet?* As if he had said,---What can I possibly want of the End and Scope of the Law, which is to make Men perfect, since I have guided my whole Life hitherto by its Divine Precepts? To which our Saviour returned this Answer,---*If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, &c.* Now to say, *If thou wilt be perfect*, implies that he was not so already. For as in the Question to say, *What lack I yet of Perfection?* is the same as to say,---*Am not I yet perfect?* So in the Answer to say,---*If thou wilt be perfect*, is the same as to say,---*Thou art not yet so.* And then our Saviour, to prove that what he himself said was true, (namely, that he was not yet perfect) produces so home an Argument as could not possibly but convince him; *Go and sell that thou hast, &c.* as if he had replied,---I know that what you say, with regard to your Actions, is true, and I look upon you with an Eye of Approbation and Love for your so doing; but, notwithstanding this, you are not yet perfect; because a mere Conformity of the outward Man to the Law of God, is not sufficient to bring a Man to eternal Life, but the inward Man also must deeply receive the Stamp and Impression of the Divine Law: And therefore, tho' you have, as you say, kept the Commandments, yet such your Obedience did not proceed from an inward Principle, that real Love for God in which true Perfection consists; for he that really loves God, has withdrawn his Affections from earthly Things: Now, is your Love for God such, that you can, for his Sake, part with your Riches without Reluctancy?---When the young Man heard that, he went away sorrowful, being thoroughly convinced that he had greatly deceived himself with regard to his State of Perfection; as now well knowing, that tho' he thought himself just entering the Land of *Canaan*, he was not yet passed over *Jordan*: For where his *Treasure* was, there was his

*Heart* also. And thus, I think, it is, in some Measure, evident, that our Saviour's Words were designed only as a convincing Argument. But, by Way of farther Illustration of this Matter, it may not be amiss to lay before you that general Notion which we find the *Jews* had of the Law. They look'd (it seems) upon that Body of Laws which were commonly distinguished into moral, judicial, and ceremonial, as a Model of Life in which was comprised the whole Method of raising Man to *Perfection*: For having nothing but this Book of Laws to converse with, they absolutely concluded that there was nothing else required in order to the procuring eternal Life, but that the only Means which God had contrived for the Salvation and Happiness of Men, was setting before them, in an external Way, a Pandect of Statutes and Ordinances, and then leaving them to work out, and purchase to themselves everlasting Life by the Observance of them; consequently, that Life and Perfection might be acquired by virtue of those legal Precepts, which had only an external Administration. You see then, that this young Man, who had observed the Precepts of the Law, and knew it to be the general Belief of the *Jews*,—that that legal System, delivered to them on Mount *Sinai*, was a sufficient Dispensation from God to advance them to a State of Perfection and Blessedness, had some Reason to put this Question to our Lord,—*What lack I yet?*

Besides, we may farther observe,—that the *Jews* used to distinguish righteous Men into two Sorts, *Simply Righteous*, and *Perfectly Righteous*. Those were called *Simply Righteous*, whose Merits outweighed their Demerits; and the *Perfectly Righteous* were those, who, by the Performance of the whole Law, had no Transgression to put in Balance against their Merits, but rather good Deeds enough to fill both the Scales. Now, of this later Sort, (namely, the *Perfectly Righteous*) the *Jews* always supposed there might be many; and such were the *Pharisees*, (at least in their own Esteem) at the  
Time

Time of our Saviour's appearing among them. And therefore, as this young Man had never failed in the Performance of the Law, as he thought, and rested upon a *Pharasaical* Righteousness, he might well enquire of our Saviour, whether there was any Thing yet wanting to make him perfect, or one of those *Perfectly Righteous*, according to the *Jewish* Notion of *Perfection*. And then, with regard to the Answer; As true Perfection consisted in performing the external Law from an inward Principle, our Saviour might as well reply,---That he was not yet so: For tho' he had yielded Obedience to the Law, it was evident it was not out of pure Love to God, because his Affections were deeply rooted in the Things of this World; to convince him of which, he says,---*Go and sell that thou hast, &c.* which he knew he would not do; and therefore, it would be the best Argument to convince him of his Worldly-mindedness, and consequently of his Imperfection. Indeed among the *Jews* there were so many Instances of such as placed the whole of their Duty in the outward Performance, that it became a Proverb of Reproach to them; for thus says *Solomon* in his Book of *Proverbs*,---*There is a Generation of Men that are pure in their own Eyes, and yet are not washed from their Filthiness,* Prov. xxx. 12. As if he had said,---We have Instances of many, who, through a formal Compliance with the Law, imagine they have arrived to the highest Pitch of Holiness, whereas they are unacquainted with true Godliness, and know not the Power thereof: For having persevered in the outward Performance of religious Duties, they rest assured that at last they shall be Partakers of the same Happiness with the real Saints of God, not considering that God requireth *Truth in the inward Parts*, and regardeth not the outward Performance of the Duties of Religion, unless there be an universal Sanctification of the internal Faculties.

And now, that the young Man took our Saviour's Words, as designed, to be an Argument to convince him of his Imperfection,



perfection, on account of his Worldly-mindedness, (which was the second Point to be proved) I think evidently appears from what follows ;—*When the young Man heard this Saying, he went away sorrowful.* And tho' it be said,---*He went away sorrowful, for he had great Possessions* ; yet it does not follow from thence, that he looked upon it as a Command to sell or part with such his great Possessions, because this Sorrow might arise from his Conviction. For upon our Lord's Insinuation, that notwithstanding a Man had been diligent in the external Compliance with the Law, yet if his Affections were placed upon his Riches, such Compliance could not proceed from that real Love for God, which must necessarily attend the external Compliance. in order to render him one really *Perfectly Righteous*, he was immediately convinced, and it struck him to the Heart, to think how greatly he had deceived himself by a false Notion of Things : For, (as he could not but own) *he had great Possessions*,---or rather, *he was one who esteemed, or set a high Value upon his great Possessions* ; which, probably, is the true Sense and Meaning of the Original ; as indeed our Lord himself seems to explain it afterwards by *Trusting in Riches*, Mark x. 24. And not only so, but those who are well skilled in the original Language of the New Testament, may please to observe, that the very Words here used will bear that Sense. For both in this Place, and in St. Mark's Relation of this Passage, which is the most particular, the Words are, *ὃν γὰρ ἔχων κτήματα πολλά*, where *ὃν ἔχων* seems to imply more than bare possessing, which is included in the Word *κτήματα*, or *Possessions*, as here justly rendered. And as we find that the Verb *ἔχω*, in the Greek, as well as *Habeo* in the Latin, does very frequently signify to esteem, or make Account of, as *περὶ ἄδενος ἔχειν*, *habere pro nihilo* ; and that other Words derived from it bear this Sense of their Original, as *σχήσις* signifies *Affection*, and *πλεονεξία* *Covetousness* ; and as not only the Context will admit of this Interpretation, but, as before hinted,

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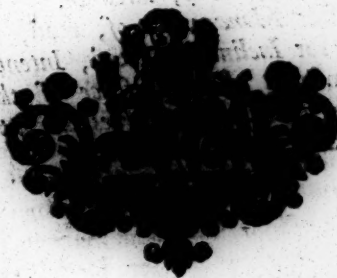
it suits much better with our Lord's Expression afterwards, of trusting in Riches; therefore I presume it may be very fairly here admitted. And indeed there are but two Objections which I can conceive possible to be raised against this Interpretation of *ἡ δὲ ἔχου*, &c. one drawn from the Manner of Expression in the Gospel by St. Luke, where it is only said,—*For he was very rich*. But this does not invalidate the Force of the other, but rather includes it; for 'tis there apparent by the young Man's Behaviour, that his Heart was set upon his Wealth; which our Blessed Lord, the Searcher of Hearts, well knowing, could not have more greatly mortified the ostentatious Notion of his Perfection, than by convincing him of his great Defect in not loving the Lord his God with all his Heart. But it may be then farther objected, that if his Sorrow arose from this Conviction, that he was really so far deficient as to have omitted the inward and vital Part, the Life and Soul of true Religion, how comes it to be added in St. Mark, (Chap. x. Verse 21.) that upon the publick Declaration he had made of his Behaviour, *Jesus beholding him, loved him*? To this I answer,---It was certainly not for the Deviation of his Heart, sufficiently known to our Saviour, and here publicly discovered; but might not our Saviour approve of his outward Behaviour, so far as that Observance of the Law reached; and especially, when the young Man did not seem to know that more was required of him, though now indeed fully convinced of it to his Sorrow.

Upon the whole then, if it should appear that our Lord's Answer did not contain a positive Command even to this young boasting *Pharisee*, but was only a divine Contrivance to touch his Heart, then much less can it be such, and become a standing Rule for all Christians, which not only other Passages in the New Testament, but even Reason itself, seem plainly to contradict. And supposing this Interpretation be admitted or not, (for I am far from presuming

to dictate to others of superior Judgment) yet I may venture to assert, that the advancing of it can do no Harm; whereas the Notion advanced by the *Methodists*, namely, that they are the intended Ground of a *levelling Principle*, has already done Mischief in the World: For instead of being any Way a Means of promoting Piety and Virtue among Men, and an Encouragement to go on to greater Degrees of Holiness, it has been found by Experience to *break the bruised Reed, and to quench the smoking Flax*. And indeed it is certain, that there are a great many well-meaning Christians, who think it their Duty to withdraw their Affections from the Things of this World, and so *forsake all that they have* in that Sense, and according to the Apostle's Direction, *set their Affections on Things above*, (which, by the Way, seems to me a full Explanation of our Lord's Meaning of *Foraking All*) who are put to a Stand at this Doctrine, and think it as much inconsistent with the Tenor of the Gospel, as in the literal Sense *to cut off our right Hand, and pluck out our right Eye*; which, perhaps, some of our *bloated Perfectionists* may come also to *enjoin*, though I think it is at present universally allowed, that by those Expressions is meant no more than parting with any Thing, tho' never so dear, or seemingly useful to us, rather than by the Enjoyment of it, forfeit our Title to eternal Happiness. — Which Riches, considered absolutely in themselves, can no more be supposed to deprive us of, unless abused to Luxury, Extravagance, Oppression, and the like, than our Hands or Eyes can be supposed to do of themselves: Therefore the Apostle allows us *to use this World so as not to abuse it*; that is, by being too intent upon it, or enjoying it intemperately; or, as Dr. *Whitby* explains it, — To be moderate in the Enjoyment of the Things of this World; not to be too much affected with them when we have, or too much afflicted when we want, or lose them. And the same Apostle gives it in Command to *Timothy*, (Chap. vi. Verse 17.) to *charge the*

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the Rich in this World that they be not high-minded, nor trust  
in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us rich-  
ly all Things to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich  
in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate:  
Laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against  
the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.

Which, God grant, may be the Portion of us all,



*Lately Published,*

**R**emarks on the Continuation of Mr. *Whitefield's* Journal; to which is added some Thoughts on the Scripture Doctrine of Regeneration, proving Mr. *Whitefield's* Notion of it erroneous.



*N. B.* The Reader of the abovementioned Remarks, is desired to correct the following *Errata*.

- P. 5. l. 9. after *to*, read, *advance*.
- P. 7. l. 20. after *Management of*, read, *our*.
- P. 13. l. 16. for *Inclination*, read, *Intention*.
- P. 33. l. 5. instead of *a Defence of the baptistal Pw*, read, *after having taken on themselves the baptistal Pw*.
- P. 36. l. 24. after *walk*, read, *not*.





